

Leaping the Decision Gap – Why Relationships Matter

Our lives revolve around relationships with other people. Relationships define who we are and what we value. What we think of other people influences how we act towards them. How others think of us, influences how they behave towards us.

In selling, relationships are important. People buy from other people. The relationship between the buying person and the selling person is fundamentally important – how could it be any other way?

Relationships don't necessarily dominate every selling transaction. When you just need to run out to a store to buy some of, for example, your favorite blue cheese, then this is not likely to be a relationship-critical transaction. However, even then, your choice of store may be influenced somewhat if you know that the cheese-loving assistant at one store in particular will be delighted to give you advice on alternatives if your favorite happens to be out of stock. And she'll entertain you with stories of cheese experiences around the world while you make your decision. You trust this cheese expert, and she makes the necessary trip to the store to buy cheese so much more interesting.

Now if the existence or non-existence of a "relationship" can make a difference in a transaction like buying a chunk of Roquefort, how important is it going to be to someone who has to make a decision on a multi-million dollar technology project? If it goes wrong, the decision maker can lose face, lose credibility in their company, or even lose their job.

When it comes to making a really complex decision, people tend to work at two levels, the scientific level and the emotional level.

Most people insist that they make buying decisions based on hard evidence – a scientific approach. Will this product do the job that I need it to do? Will it perform according to specification? Will it reduce the operational costs as much as I need it to? In reality, people ask these questions, and endeavor to find a fact-based 'scientific' answer. But when someone is thinking about buying a highly complex technology solution, sometimes there is no real way of proving the solution will deliver everything. Except by actually doing it.

How much hard work and analysis, how many facts, are going to *prove* without question that a solution will do a specific job well; that the price will be fair; and that the solution supplier will fix any unforeseen problems that arise? It is not possible in practice for customers to assess all of the variables, consider every conceivable option, and allow for every contingency.